

**Occupational Health, Safety
and Wellbeing Services**

Phased returns to work

Guidance for Managers



Coventry City Council

www.coventry.gov.uk/ohsw

Introduction

- 1.1** In order to more successfully rehabilitate employees back into the workplace following long term ill health, a 'phased return to work' is often recommended.
- 1.2** Many organisations view this option as best practice, however, it is individual managers that agree to and support the phased return.
- 1.3** To ensure a more successful outcome, phased returns to work following sickness absence need prior discussion and appropriate planning.
- 1.4** Whenever a phased return is to be implemented, the program must be agreed between the manager and the employee based on the needs of the individual and the service.
- 1.5** The programme can be planned with reference to these general guidelines and any specific advice from the Occupational Health Service following a health assessment.
- 1.6** It should be noted there is no objective clinical measure which can be applied to the length or pattern of a phased return to work.

Aims and Objectives

- 2.1** The aim is not only to achieve an earlier return to work but also to ensure that the return has permanence, which reduces unnecessary time loss.
- 2.2** A phased return should help the employee to adjust physically and psychologically to a return to work. Rehabilitation is an important factor to be considered.
- 2.3** A flexible yet controlled approach should be adopted. The support of Human Resources is integral to the success of the programme.
- 2.4** A phased return will help to provide additional support where job redesign/adaptation and/or redeployment/retraining is to be implemented.

Procedure to be followed

- 3.1** Human Resources will refer the employee to the Occupational Health Service in most cases, by forwarding the completed Referral Form - Health Enquiry (RD1).
- 3.2** An Occupational Health Practitioner will then carry out a health assessment.
- 3.3** A referral may be made to the Counseling Service which is able to offer additional support to individuals in the process of returning to work following sickness absence.
- 3.4** Following a health assessment, a report will be sent to Human Resources/manager, giving advice on health issues and making recommendations, for example, on the need for a phased return to work.
- 3.5** Where a phased return has been agreed, the manager and employee will plan a suitable timetable. Managers/Human Resources will ensure that sufficient consideration is given to the individual's needs along with work requirements.
- 3.6** The non-worked hours of a phased return may be based on annual leave, unpaid leave or sickness absence.
- 3.7** The manager will monitor the employee throughout the phased return. Managers must ensure that the employee does not try to complete 37 hours work in the reduced amount of time available per week, and that agreed hours are adhered to.
- 3.8** The individual's progress and the suitability of the timetable should be formally reviewed on a weekly basis by the employee and manager, unless individual requirements dictate that it should be more frequent.
- 3.9** If, due to health reasons, the employee is experiencing difficulty continuing with a phased return, they should be referred back to the Occupational Health Service.

Example of a Phased Return Programme

An example of a phased return program is demonstrated below, however individual requirements vary and these need to be taken into consideration.

In some cases a full return to work will be achieved in less time.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1	Off	Half day	Off	Half day	Off
Week 2	Half day	Off	Half day	Off	Full day
Week 3	Full day	Half day	Off	Full day	Full day
Week 4	Full day	Full day	Off	Full day	Full day
Week 5	RETURN TO NORMAL WORKING PATTERN				

Further information:

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